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Those who have studied the subject most closely entertain little doubt that it is in our power almost wholly to extinguish habitual and professional crime by cutting off its feeders, locking up all its practisers peremptorily and permanently, and stopping the earths of its encouragers and capitalists,—in a word by merely *resolving* that it shall no longer flourish unopposed, by making it too perilous and difficult and unpleasant a business to be carried on for gain. Yet in spite of all we have gone on, year after year, session after session, simply growling at the nuisance, simply nibbling at the evil, simply applying poultices and palliatives to the eating cancer, and devoting our best energies and our warmest interest to the compound householder of London and the Fenian cottier of Tipperary.

We have already incidentally mentioned two other great questions, both very complicated, very extensive, and very urgent,—the government of the metropolis, and the reform of our Railway Management and Legislation,—with which it is impossible to deal comprehensively or satisfactorily while parties are struggling for power, and contending on barren battle-fields. The municipal administration of this overgrown congeries of cities which we call the Capital of the Empire, is notoriously inefficient, imbecile, and absurd,—without system and without grasp. Its police is feeble and inadequate, its public works are administered by an improvised makeshift of a Board, and everything else is managed by vestries. In short, the affairs of a town population of three millions of souls are more clumsily provided for and more disgracefully transacted than those of any decent provincial city, yet no Government has either time or strength to grapple with the problem. Our railways have cost four hundred millions when they ought only to have cost three; half of them are insolvent, many are in abeyance, some in Chancery; thousands of shareholders have been ruined, and the incomes of others are indefinitely suspended in consequence of proceedings so nearly imbecile as to look like fraud, and so manifestly illegal as to invite the penalties of the law; the nation is heavily taxed, and at the same time inadequately served; the entire subject calls clamorously for the most searching investigation and the most energetic handling;—yet the attention of the public, and the powers of the Administration are so engaged with more exciting topics, that nothing can be done; there is no leisure, no strength, and apparently no capacity or daring, in any set of statesmen to take the thing in hand. These grave and pressing questions have already been pushed aside for three sessions, and are most of them still pushed into the background, in order that we might force on an electoral scheme which has done so little to change the face of England, and an ecclesiastical one which will do even less to change the temper or the tone of Ireland. Is there no guilt and no folly in all this?

In closing this sketch of the heavy price we pay for the blessing of Parliamentary Government, if it be a good—of the manifold mischiefs it entails upon us, if it be an evil and a blunder—one grave consideration may be just alluded to. Whether its drawbacks and intrinsic defects are to be cured or to be aggravated by our recent changes, it would be rash to predict. But one thing is certain. Whatever be its failings and incompetencies they can no longer be attributed to a restricted suffrage or an imperfect representation of the People's will. If they continue and augment, it must be because they are inherent in its essence,—because, for a great Empire and a complicated social State, Government by a Popular Assembly or a 'Public Meeting,' is a system essentially at fault.

ART. V.—*The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri.* Translated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. London, 1867.

IT is one of the hopeful signs of the literature of our time that the great poet-prophet of the Middle Ages seems more and more to draw towards him those who have any kindred elements of nobleness. As we welcome translations of Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, not only on account of their intrinsic merit, but because they are witnesses of the power which the great master minds of Greece still exercise to purify and strengthen, so it is with Dante. The task may be a more difficult one, the excellence which men seek to reproduce in another language more unapproachable, but the attempt is good for those who make it, and for many others. Each translation has, at least, its own circle of readers, and helps to draw them to the study of the original, and swells the number of those who drink from the pure and undefiled wells of the world's loftiest poetry. So long as this influence is at work, we may look to it as counteracting the sensuous effeminacy which at present threatens to plunge the art and literature of Europe into an almost Caprean debasement. It is pleasant to think that Germany, in the translations published by the King of Saxony, under the *nom de plume* of 'Philalethes,' Köppisch, and others,

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has the same purifying element. To France, on the other hand, in the works of MM. Ozanam and Fauriel, we owe some of the most valuable helps to the study of the 'Commedia.' It is not our present purpose to note the several excellencies and defects of the translations to which we have referred. But the fact that they have all of them made the name of the great Florentine more of a reality to English readers than it has been hitherto—that Mr. Longfellow has supplied them with a large mass of illustrative materials * which were not before so easily accessible—that Mr. Theodore Martin and Mr. Rossetti, by their translations of the 'Vita Nuova' and the 'Minor Poems,' have given them the key to the marvellous inner life which had its outcome in the 'Divina Commedia'—that Mr. Barlow has brought the labours of years to bear on some of the obscurer points in the poet's life and works—this renders it, we believe, a fitting time for an attempt to portray that life, as far as our limits permit, with something like completeness. The labours of Italian scholars, and the munificent enthusiasm of an English nobleman, have supplied materials of another kind, and those who are acquainted with the publications executed at Lord Vernon's cost, and with the Memoirs written by Balbo Fraticelli, and others, will own that no industry has been spared in bringing together all that can be found in public or private archives in the shape of documentary evidence. Removed as we may be by the distance of nearly five hundred years, our knowledge of the facts of Dante's life, and of what he himself was, is far fuller and clearer than was that of the generation that immediately succeeded him. The celebration of the sixth centenary of his birth in A.D. 1865, which for a time turned the current of political enthusiasm at Florence into another channel, though it does not appear to have been productive (such celebrations seldom are) of any literature † beyond the average number of odes and orations, must yet take its place among the tokens that the great Florentine, 'being dead, yet speaketh,' and that his influence cannot be set aside when we are forming an estimate of the probable future of the Italian people.

It is not necessary here to trace the remoter ancestry of the poet's family, or to enter into the hot controversies which, as with our own Shakespeare, have gathered round the orthography of his name.* We may content ourselves with noting as facts, that helped to mould his character, that the Aldighieri, or Alighieri prided themselves on belonging to the *populus* of the old Florentine burghers, who traced their origin to Rome; not to the *plebs*, rough, and mean, and brutal, who had flocked in from Fiesole;† nor, again to the nobles, who had been compelled by the growing power of the citizens to pull down their castles and to live within the walls of the city as on the same level with the others. The glory of their house was the memory of the poet's great-grandfather Cacciaguida, through whom they claimed kindred with the nobler and more powerful branch of the family that retained the old name of the Elisei. In the great struggles of the thirteenth century they had been consistently on the Guelph side, not only or chiefly from any enthusiasm for the Papacy as such, or devotion to individual Popes, but because they were Italians fighting against the foreigner, citizens against the nobles, maintaining at once their municipal freedom and the independence of the Church's spiritual head. The immediate kindred of the poet had stood the test of suffering in that cause. They and the other members of the party were twice driven by their opponents into temporary exile—once in 1248, when Frederick of Antioch, the son of the Emperor Frederick II., attacked Florence and compelled them to seek safety in flight, and again (the death of the Emperor, in 1250, having allowed them in the mean time to return) in 1260, five years before Dante's birth, after the disastrous battle of Montaperti. On the latter occasion his uncle Brunetto was one of the chosen guard of the great war-chariot, the *Caroccio*, which served as the rallying-point of the Florentine armies in all their battles. His father apparently

* Strangely enough, however, with all his seemingly omnivorous reading on this subject, Mr. Longfellow appears to be ignorant of the existence of the masterly essay on Dante, published by the Rev. R. W. Church in his volume of 'Essays and Reviews,' and of another, very interesting in its way, by Mazzini, now included in vol. ii. of his collected works. The excellence of the former is acknowledged by Goeschel in his able article on *Dante* in Herzog's 'Real-Encyclopädie.' We have looked in vain in Mr. Longfellow's notes for any reference to either, or to the admirable notes to the King of Saxony's translation.

† An exception must be made in favour of Professor Ferrazi's valuable 'Ciclopedia Dantesca,' which brings together a large store of biographical and bibliographical materials. Of this also Mr. Longfellow does not seem to have availed himself.

* As with most names in mediæval documents we find every possible variety, sometimes even in the same document. We do not know that any advocate of Shakspere or Shakespear has grown into such a white heat of fury as Scolari shows against '*Perroneo, storpio, illegittimo, ingiusto e detestando Alighieri.*'

† '*Bestie Fiesolane,*' Inf. xv. 75.

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shared the fate of his party; but as they did not return to Florence, as a body, till 1266, when Clement IV. called in the intervention of Charles of Anjou, Count of Provence, against the dominant Ghibelline faction, and the birth of Dante took place on May 14th, 1265, we must believe either that he obtained permission to return before the others, or that his wife preceded him by a few months.

The position of Aldighiero degli Aldighieri on his return to Florence, as an advocate in profession, and the proprietor of one or more houses in the central quarter of the city, gave him a good position among his fellow-citizens. By his first wife, Lapa di Cialuffi, he had a son Francesco; by his second, Bella (her family name is unknown), he became the father of the poet. It is uncertain whether a daughter, who completed the family, belonged to the first or second marriage. Whether the surroundings of his childhood exercised any influence on the growth of the poet's mind and character is a question which we have but inadequate materials for answering. Few men have left scantier traces of personal affection towards those with whom he was united by closest family relationship. From first to last, though he exults in belonging to an ancient family, and cherishes its noble names, there is no mention in his writings of father or mother, brother or sister, wife or children. A master passion came across his life and absorbed the affections which enter so largely into most men's characters. In the absence of any direct evidence we must fall back upon what is, it may be, a half-mythical after-thought, and say that if his mother dreamt the dream which Boccaccio says she dreamt before his birth, her son may have inherited from her some elements of a poet's imagination:—

'She dreamt,' Boccaccio says, 'that she was under a lofty laurel, on a green meadow, by a clear fountain, and that she there brought forth a son; that he fed upon the berries which the laurel bore, and drank of the clear waters, and grew up and became a shepherd; and strove to pluck the leaves of the laurel, the fruit of which had fed him; and that struggling to reach them he fell down, and rose up no longer a man, but in the form of a peacock.'

Of the boyhood of Dante we accordingly know nothing till we come to that marvellous history which he has himself recorded in the 'Vita Nuova.' In the whole range of literature there is no parallel to that narrative by a man of twenty-seven of his emotions as a boy of nine, of a change like that of a new birth passing over his spirit, so that his life could never afterwards be as it had been before. '*Incipit Vita Nova*' was written in the calendar of his spirit on that first of May, A.D. 1274, when Alighieri took his boy to the house of Folco Portinari, and his eye fell upon the form of Beatrice, then a year younger than himself, clad in crimson, and seeming to him as a vision of heavenly beauty, fulfilling all the promise of her name, the 'youngest of the angels.' Unless he transfers to that first interview the passionate feelings of later years, his whole being was convulsed with a strange spiritual, rather than physical precocity, to its inmost depths. He shook with agitation and cried to himself in words which came as an oracle '*Ecce Deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi.*' Then came, as from a calmer, more spiritual intuition, revealing to him the meaning of this strange fascination, '*Apparuit beatitudo vestra.*' Then once more, as from the lower nature that shrank from this subjugation to a lofty and ideal purity, '*Heu miser! quia frequenter impeditus ero deinceps.*'

From that May morning the whole life of Dante received its colouring. The few hours which to all but one boy of nine years old seemed a time of ordinary festivity, were pregnant for him, and through him for the literature of Europe, with issues of incalculable moment. From that moment his life was not as the lives of other men. He saw what they could not see, and heard what they could not hear. We might almost say of him, in the language of another time and race, that the Word of the Lord had come to him and marked him out when yet 'a child,' as the seer of Anathoth was marked out, to be a prophet of the Truth. He had looked on one in whose childish beauty he had seen, as it were, an impersonation of heavenly wisdom, and he had experienced in all its power that passionate intensity of love (δεινοὺς ἔρωτας), of which Plato had spoken, as the sure consequence of any visible manifestation of it.*

The first impression was not followed by any familiar intimacy, and so was left with edge unblunted and clearness undiminished. Partly, it may be, the death of the poet's father in the same year, partly the seclusion of a girl's life and the absence of any close friendship between the two families, kept them asunder. All that was possible was to watch for opportunities to get one glimpse of her as she went to and fro to church, and gaze on her from a distance with a devout and awe-stricken adoration.

In the mean time his education went on, and he threw himself into the studies of boyhood with the same vehement enthusiasm.

* Plato, *Phædr.* p. 250.

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Love did not distract him. It only seemed to strengthen the authority of his higher reason and open his ears to hear the voice of conscience more distinctly. In the fathomless corruption of Florentine society—as dark, if we may trust his own picture of it, as the age of Tiberius or of the Medici—such a safeguard must have been invaluable. The contrast between that celestial purity and the impurity of the teacher, whose '*cara e buona imagine paterna*' had at first won his love, whose wide knowledge he could not help revering, but whom he discovered to be base and sensual with the foulest form of sensuality, helped to keep him pure. The shock of that discovery to a nature such as Dante's must have been hardly less mighty than the early vision of beauty had been. It opened his eyes to see the infinite evil into which men may fall when they yield to their lower nature, and against which no culture or gifts of intellect can guard them, and to turn from it with the scorn and hatred which it deserved. He had a vision even then of Paradise and Hell. The union of the old respect for the intellectual superiority of his teacher and of the sharp stern judgment which places him in torment,—

'Yea, in my mind and heart there still is set
That face kind, tender, fatherly of thine,
When thou didst teach me, in the world's life yet,
By slow degrees how man becomes divine;'—
—*Inferno*, xv. 82-85.

this does but reproduce the blended feelings of admiration and loathing with which, in the years of his more advanced youth, he must have pursued his studies under such an instructor as Brunetto Latini.*

As a teacher Brunetto did his work effectively. Dreary and unprofitable as the contents of the 'Tesoro' may seem to us now, it was then an encyclopædia of knowledge, historical, scientific, ethical, storing the minds of his pupils with facts that were hardly otherwise accessible. Dante, and the others whom he taught, were led through the whole cycle of Latin classical literature, possibly even to the great epic of the '*Sovrano Poeta*' of Greece.† Under him he learnt to admire and strive to imitate the '*bello stilo*' of Virgil, and the lofty line of Lucan, and the smoother grace of Statius. Boethius led him to think of Divine Philosophy as the comforter of human sorrows, and furnished the starting-point for the symbolism which identified it with the fairest of all human forms. The imagery was, of course, in part such as might present itself to men's minds at any period, in part also may be traced to the personification of Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs. But the opening vision of the *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, with its picture of the '*mulier reverendi admodum vultus, oculis ardentibus, colore vivido atque inexhausti vigoris*,' was at once nearer to Dante in point of time, and a book so popular at that period that it was not likely to have been unread by him. The ethics of the great Stagirite '*il maestro di color chi sanno*,' but also, as he says, '*il mio maestro*,' helped him, as they helped Roger Bacon, and many other mediæval thinkers, to look upon morality as a science resting on broad, unchanging principles, not as a mere aggregate of arbitrary precepts. The wide culture which such an education brought with it, though it left his theology to bear the impress of his age, gave it also a nobleness and width which a more rigidly ecclesiastical training would have lacked. If the dogmatism of his time hindered him from accepting the hope that there was room in the 'many mansions' of the Father's house for all who have loved the Truth, he yet turns to those who had been his teachers with love and reverence. He places them where they suffer only the pain of those

'Who without hope live ever in desire.'

Though in the outer circle of the Inferno they dwell almost as in the calm of the Elysian meadows, in the *limbo* which mediæval theology represented as a fair region with clear rivers and goodly groves and

'Pleasant field where fresh green grass grew tall.'

* Few English readers, and not many Italian, can claim to have mastered Brunetto's other poem 'Il Pataffio,' but the choice of the slang *patois* of Florence, and the subjects of which it treats indicate, to say the least, a corrupt taste. In his own *Tesoretto* he describes himself as among those who are '*un poco mondanetti*.' The word, as then used, was only too significant.

† We incline to the belief that he had at least 'tasted' Homer in the original. No translation had at that time been made; yet he speaks of him with the glowing admiration which all but implies knowledge. There were many at Paris at that time, as the works of Roger Bacon show, who studied Greek and spared no expense in obtaining Greek books. Grosseteste had brought Greek scholars even to England. It was probable enough that such studies should not be neglected on the South side of the Alps when they flourished in the less genial North, and there are traces enough in Dante's prose works of at least some knowledge of its elements. Comp. in the *Convito*, the derivation of 'Protonoe' (II. 3), of 'Philosophia' (III. 11), of *hormen* (ὁρμὴν) (IV. 21), of 'ἐπιείκεια' (*De Mon.* I.), of 'tragedy,' 'comedy,' and 'allegory,' in the *Letter to Can Grande*. So in the same book, he speaks of Homer as 'not easily bearing translation into Latin, losing his beauty in the process as the Psalms of David lost theirs' (I. 7).

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It is the poet's highest glory in his manhood, as it had been the longing hope of his youth, to be one of—

'That goodly fellowship of noblest song.'

In one respect Italy and Europe may rejoice that Dante did not follow the example of his teacher and many other men of talent of the time. The influence of Provençal literature, and the fashion set by the partisans of Charles of Anjou, had made that dialect, as it were, the Court language of Florence. Young poets chose it for their sonnets. Brunetto himself adopted it for what he looked upon as a great educational text book, the *Tesoro*, which his scholar makes him remember, even in Hell, with something of an author's pride. Those who gave themselves to the graver tasks of literature, as a matter of course, used Latin. Here, however, Dante's pride in being an Italian and a Florentine, perhaps also his inherited Guelph prepossessions against any foreign domination, guided him aright. He did for the language and literature of Italy what, a little later, Gower and Chaucer did for those of England. Loving his native speech with a passionate admiration for its '*dolcissima ed amabilissima bellezza*,' he made it the instrument with which to utter his profoundest thoughts, and from which he brought forth tones of unequalled melody. He scorned those who, like Sordello of Mantua, despised it, as themselves '*abominabili cattivi*.' Once or twice he tried his hand, as in sport, at patchwork sonnets in which Italian and Provençal appeared in alternate lines. Latin was naturally the vehicle for treatises which were addressed to scholars, but in all that was most truly characteristic he continued faithful to the language of his love, and, in the 'De Vulgari Eloquio,' written at the age of forty, deliberately asserted and vindicated his preference.

The arts which were afterwards to be the glory of his country were not wanting to his completeness. To music, both in its theory and practice, he gave himself up with a passionate devotion. To him, as to Milton, the chants and hymns of the Church came with an ineffable power to cheer and strengthen. The ever-varying strains of angels and the spirits of the blessed, are the chief elements of the joy of Paradise. In the 'milder shades of Purgatory' music is the chief purifying influence that soothes and cleanses. He remembers Casella's song of love as that which had brought tranquillity to all the passionate longings of his youth, and wedded his own words to music worthy of them.* In the sister art, too, he, like his young friend Giotti, felt the impulse which had been given by the genius and power of Cimabue and Oderisi, and filled up the blank which the loss of his beloved one left by tracing that which had been to him as the face of an angel, and which he now pictured to himself as in angelic glory.

The life of the scholar and the artist did not hinder the free development of the man. Though toiling as a student with a sleepless energy and a passionate thirst for fame, he hardly seemed to work. Men wondered how one whom they so seldom saw at his desk could get through so much. He was the centre of a circle of friends, some, like Guido Cavalcanti, older than himself; others, like Cino da Pistoia and Giotto, younger,—one too, of princely birth, Charles Martel, the son of Charles of Naples, who died young, and whom the poet places in Paradise—enthusiastic, as young Italians have been for many generations, in their devotion to arts and letters, interchanging sonnets, discussing sometimes with a passionate vehemence, which endangered the continuance of their friendship, the merits of the beauties or the poets whom they most admired. Nor were the stir of the camp and the thrill of the battlefield alien to his nature. When the death of Charles of Anjou and Nicolas III. enabled the remnant of the Ghibelline party to raise their heads, and Arezzo fell into the hands of Bishop Guglielmo degli Ubertini as its leader, Florence and Sienna joined in a league, and an expedition, in which Dante took part, was sent out against it in 1288, but returned without having made any effective demonstration. In the following year (June 11th)—no longer a novice, and yet, as he himself tells, young enough to know in their power, all the strange emotions of battle, the nervous agitation which is all but fear at its beginning, and exulting joy when it was over—he took part, as one of the advanced guards, in the battle of Campaldino, in which the Ghibelline party under Guglielmo were utterly routed. The opening words of Canto xxii. of

* The passage is at once so beautiful and so characteristic that we are fain to quote it. The poet speaks to his friend—

'And I, "If thy new state to thee doth spare
The skill and memory of the songs of love,
Which stilled of old my every eager care,
I pray thee yet thy power to comfort prove,
On this my soul which with its fleshly mould
O'erburdened, slow and wearily doth move."
"*O love, who with my soul dost converse hold*,"
He then began in such melodious tone,
That still that sweetness thrills me as of old;
My master, and I too, and every one
Of those with him seemed in it so to joy,
As if our minds could dwell on that alone.'

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the 'Inferno' probably refer to this his first campaign—

'I have seen knights break up their camps for war,
Commence the attack, and march in full array,
And sometimes seek a safe retreat afar.
I've seen the plunderer o'er your fair fields stray,
Ye Aretines, yea, seen the invaders wheel,
And now in joust and now in tourney play,
Now with bell's chime and now with clarion's peal.'

He returned to experience, after a short interval, the first great sorrow of his life. Through all the years that had passed since their first meeting hitherto he had been true to his first love. At the age of eighteen it had revived in him with a new intensity. A kindly glance, a gesture of salutation had opened the deep fountains of his heart, and made him conscious of his power to be a poet. It was as if the *Deus fortior* had indeed come upon him with a might which he could not resist, bestowing new gifts of thought, and speech, and action. To one whose passion was so pure and idealising, so free from all thought of possessing the object of his love, her marriage with another (though it might cause a momentary pang so sharp that he could only hint at it when he retraced the history of his love, as having led him to the boundary which he might not pass if he wished to return in peace) made but little difference. Her presence was as a spell to banish any evil thought. If there was a struggle it was not as between conscience and desire, but as between the feebleness of the mortal vessel to bear the strain of a passion so intense, and the apocalypse of Beauty, Truth, Purity, which had thus been given to him. Mingling with the joy and the pain which were thus inextricably blended, there came dim foreboding and fear that the presence he loved would not long be his. As with a singular parallelism to a poet of our own, who has told us how there flashed across his soul a sudden thrill of fear—

'"Oh Mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"'

he said to himself, 'Of a surety it must needs be that the most gentle Beatrice will die.' The thought grew into a vision. The sun went down, and the stars appeared, dim as if with weeping, and the birds fell dead from the sky, and one came to him and said, 'Hast thou not heard? She that was thine excellent lady hath been taken away from life;' and he went to look on the dead body, and saw that it seemed to speak unto him in its calmness, 'I have attained to look on the beginning of peace.'

The vision was too true a prophecy. On the 9th of June, 1290, the light of his life passed away from him. He would not dwell upon the circumstances of her death. To him she was living with a nobler life, with a power to bless and purify beyond that which she had possessed on earth. For a time he was drawn to something like a passion for one who shewed pity for his sorrow, who reminded him in complexion of his lost love, beautiful and bright as she had been; but the vision of the child Beatrice in her purity came once again before him, and made him look on the new affection as poor and unworthy. He would devote himself to the work of making the name of his beloved immortal, 'writing what had never yet been written of any woman,' in the hope that it might be given him, when the struggles of life were over, to share the blessedness of her immortality. Already, though as yet in the indistinctness of a dream, there was the germ of the 'Divina Commedia' in his mind. He had to pass through a varied and bitter experience before it took form and shape.

What has happened with twice ten thousand others happened also with him. Intense as may be the agony of sorrow, sacred as may be the memories of the past, the great stream of life sweeps on around a man, and bears him on its current. He must live with his fellows as he best can, he acts on their counsels, forms new ties, enters on new lines of action in literature or politics. So it was with Dante. The ink of the 'Vita Nuova' was hardly dry* when he whose life seemed consecrated to that first love became the husband of Gemma Donati, the daughter of one of the leaders of the wealthy Guelph families of Florence. It may be that he was guided, as Boccaccio says, by the advice of his family, who looked on this as a natural remedy for the absorbing sorrow which was injuring his health, and threatened to throw him back in his career. It may be, as Mr. Rossetti (following Fraticelli) conjectures, in his notes on the 'Vita Nuova,' that she was the 'fair lady' who had sympathized with his grief, and thus gained for a time a place in his affections. The marriage is said not to have been a happy one, and it is clear that from the first the conditions of all true wedded happiness were wanting. The heart of the husband was in the grave of Beatrice. It was a '*vita vedova*' at the very moment of his nuptials. The common course of life brought with it a haunting sense of shame and self-reproach that he had been able to acquiesce in it. Even the birth of his children seems to have brought no touch of the joy of fatherhood. He never

* It may, indeed, have been written in the first months *after* marriage. Dates are uncertain here.

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mentions them. They are to him as the accidents of his life, belonging to its outer courts, having no claim to enter within its sanctuary. There seems to have been no actual breach, like that which separated Milton from his first wife, and there may be slight foundation for the charge that she had the temper of Xanthippe, or that the poet provoked her by his unfaithfulness. They lived together for twelve years, till his home was broken up by the decree of banishment, and had seven children.* During his exile she looked after his property, watched every opportunity for obtaining its restoration, and brought up her family. Judging by their subsequent career she must have done her work well. But it is painfully decisive of the terms on which the two had lived that there was no effort to bring about a reunion; she preferred to remain in Florence. If, in one so capable of intense bitterness, the silence of the 'Commedia' may be taken as fair evidence that his feelings towards her had not passed into hate or scorn, it at least indicates that his whole married life was a thing to which he would not willingly recur, a mistake drawing him down from his ideal, part of the great confusion in which the unity of his life was lost. Without accepting to the full Boccaccio's statement (made, however, we must remember, by one who knew the poet's nephew intimately, and derived from him most of the materials of his memoir), that he was 'conspicuously licentious' both before and after his exile, it yet remains true that there were sins of this kind which, as in his own words to Forese ('Purg.' xxiii.), and those of Beatrice to him, when she meets him, in the 'Purgatorio' (xxx. and xxxi.),† he could not remember without shame and confusion, and that, writing in his exile, he speaks, with a strange forgetfulness both of the heavenly and earthly ties against which he was offending, of having found rest and comfort in the companionship of a third mistress. We turn willingly from this dark page in Dante's life, knowing that he judged himself more severely than we can judge him, and that therefore the sins, whatever their number and their kind, brought with them their own punishment. They left no lasting taint upon the inmost soul of the poet. From first to last, with a consistency quite marvellous when we remember the corruption of the society in which he lived and the erotic character both of the Provençal and Italian literature in which his contemporaries delighted, there is not one trace of the baseness which revels in the memory of voluptuous joy, and so at once intensifies the evil in the writer's own soul, and transmits the infection onwards.

The absence of anything in his home life to satisfy his cravings—his scorn for the mere trade of the *littérateur* who works only for *danari e dignità*—drove him to the study of philosophy. What had been the textbooks of youthful studies—the treatise of Boethius, 'De Consolatione Philosophiæ,' and Cicero's 'De Amicitiâ'—now came to have a fresh life and meaning for him. For nearly three years from the date of his marriage (1292–1295) he gave himself to these pursuits with hardly any interruption. Partly they attracted him because they served to raise him out of his two-fold trouble, partly also because he saw in them the means of fitting himself for the great enterprise over which he was still brooding. In this work, though Brunetto's encyclopædaic knowledge may have helped him at the outset, he must soon have gone beyond his old master. Philosophy became for him, as for all great thinkers of the time, but the vestibule of theology, and the representatives of theology were to be found in the dogmatic teachers whom the Mendicant Orders had given to the world, and who were filling Europe with their fame. The fourfold system of interpretation, giving to every divine word a meaning, literal, or ethical, or allegorical, or anagogical (*sc.* mystical), on which he dwells, in his letter to Can Grande, with such manifest delight, and which is the key to the manifold meaning of his own symbolism, must have been learnt from them. And still, as he studied with an intense application which brought with it the risk of loss of sight, so that he too had almost taken his place, like Milton, with—

'Blind Thamyris, and blind Mæonides,
Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old,'

* It is significant that he gave his first daughter the name of Beatrice.

† Once again we are led to quote what is almost essential to our understanding this period of the poet's life. Beatrice is speaking—

'Awhile my face was strong his life to build,
And I, unveiling to him my young eyes,
In the right path to lead him on was skilled.
So soon as I had reached the point where lies
The threshold of new life, and change came fast,
He left me, lured by other fantasies:
And when I from the flesh to spirit passed
And loveliness and beauty in me grew,
Less dear, less loved was I to him at last.
He turned his feet to paths that were not true,
Following of good the semblance counterfeit
Which ne'er to promise gives fulfilment due.
Nought it availed God's teaching to entreat,
Wherewith, in vision oft and otherwise
I called him back, but little heed to meet;
So low he fell, that ways however wise
Were all too feeble found his soul to save,
Except to show the lost one's miseries.'
Purgat. xxx., 120–138.

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the memory of Beatrice was with him. She came to him with warning voice in dreams and visions of the night. Each new thought, each intuition of the truth, gathered round her and formed part of her aureole of glory. He could not think of philosophy as other than a 'gentle lady,' compassionate in look and act. He identified his beloved one with heavenly Wisdom, as Comte identified Clotilde des Vaux with his *cultus* of Humanity. Her presence led him through all lower spheres of truth to the very Heaven of Heavens. He saw her image before him as he plunged into the dreams of the Areopagite, or the subtleties of the 'Summa Theologiæ.' Partly, it may be, from the convictions of an earnest soul seeking after truth, but partly also from yielding himself to the guidance of this element in his nature with all its power to purify, he kept clear of the epicureanism in thought and life which the example of Frederick II. had made fashionable, and which drew away many of his contemporaries. Throughout, indeed, he was faithful to what he had received as the teaching of the Church. In spite of his stern words against the sins of individual popes, in spite of the later theory which made him foremost in the list of protestants against the temporal authority of the Bishop of Rome, his theology was in all essential points thoroughly mediæval, stamped with the stamp of Bernard, and Dominic, and Aquinas. If the words of Goethe—

> 'Das Ewig-Weibliche
> Zieht uns heran;'

are applicable to him as the votary of Beatrice, they are not less so when we remember his magnificent hymn to the honour of the Queen of Heaven.

The statement that at this period of his life he contemplated joining the Franciscan Order, and took the initial step of entering himself as a probationary brother, must be rejected as resting on no trustworthy evidence. It probably rose out of his devotion to studies in which so few laymen took an interest, so alien from the tastes of the *littérateurs* with whom he had hitherto associated. To seek the knowledge on which his heart was set he had to frequent the lecture-rooms of religious teachers, and here he found himself chiefly, if not exclusively, in the company of those who were either training for the priesthood, or devoting themselves to the preaching work of the two great Orders. For the founders of those Orders he felt the profoundest reverence and admiration. For himself, however, there seems to have been no intermission of the life either of the citizen or the scholar. In the former character he joined the Florentines in their expedition against Arezzo, and fought with them at Caprona. Under the short-lived constitution which had prevailed at Florence since the settlement of 1282, he could not hold any public office till the age of thirty, nor then unless he was enrolled in one or other of the guilds of the seven 'greater arts.' Though this step was manifestly taken for the sake of the opening which it gave for political activity, there was something characteristic in his choice. He passed over the corporations of the notaries, the money-changers, the dealers in linen, silk, and woollen, and furs, and chose that of physicians and apothecaries. Here there was at least something of a scientific side to the employment, connecting itself with his studies of Galen and Dioscorides, which brought it into contact with his favourite tastes. He could not work in it without gaining a knowledge of many facts in nature and in art, worthy to be treasured up as materials for after use in the store-house of his memory. It is possible, as one commentator has suggested, that he may in this way have come in contact with Marco Polo, the great Venetian traveller, who about this time returned from the East to Italy.

The ability and knowledge which his fellow-citizens could see and comprehend, little as they dreamt of what was passing within him, soon gave him the prominence he was seeking. His name appears as taking part in the debates of the Council of the Podesta in 1295, in the Council of the Hundred (the *Consiglio del Capitano*) in June, 1296. In 1299 he was sent on an embassy to settle a dispute with a neighbouring commune of San Gemignano. A somewhat apocryphal statement extends the number of diplomatic missions to fourteen, including two to Venice, one to Genoa, two to Naples, four to Rome, one to the King of France, and one to the King of the Huns (!).

The political state of Florence when Dante thus became prominent was that of a temporary lull. The Ghibelline party had been crushed; many were still in exile. Those who remained at home were compelled to give in their adhesion to the Guelph cause. Pisa and Arezzo no longer contested the supremacy of their victorious rivals. But the old jealousies of party, family quarrels, personal pique, still smouldered, and were ready to burst at any moment, with a ferocity which reminds us of the conflicts of Corcyra, or the most embittered struggles of the Populus and Plebs, the Senate and the Tribunes, in the history of the Roman Republic. The party of the nobles found a leader in Donati, that of the middle-class in Vieri de' Cerchi. A private quarrel gave the latter in

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1295 (the year of Dante's entrance on the stage of public life), the support of an aristocratic leader, Gian della Bella, and under his direction a Gonfaloniere of Justice was appointed with 1000 soldiers as a body guard, and sharp decrees passed with a special eye to Donati and his party, making all the members of a house responsible for the acts of one who belonged to it. Riots took place, in which the palace of the Podesta was injured, and that of the Donati attacked. This provoked a counter-movement, and Della Bella was accused of treason. The people rushed to his defence, the nobles armed themselves. Bloodshed seemed inevitable, when the contest was for a time averted by the nobleness of the popular leader, who chose a voluntary exile rather than endanger the tranquillity of the State.

For five years (the historians of Florence dwell with significant emphasis on the *length* of the period), this tranquillity continued. It was broken by one of those seemingly meaningless quarrels, like Irish 'faction-fights,' in which no shadow of principle is at issue, which is simply the occasion upon which old grudges and hereditary enmities fasten. In this case the cause of the quarrel was imported from another city. The jealousies and blood-feuds of two branches of the house of the Cancellieri at Pistoia threw that city into confusion. The Florentines, exercising their supremacy, took its affairs into their hands, and, as a measure of precaution, arrested the leaders of both sides, and kept them in custody at Florence. Their presence was almost as fatal as was that of the Spartan prisoners from Sphacteria on the political combinations of Attica. Each found sympathy and support. The Cerchi took up the cause of the Cancellieri *Bianchi* (so called as tracing their descent from Bianca, one of the wives of the founder of the house); the Donati naturally allied themselves with those who, by way of contrast, had taken the name of the *Neri*. The conflagration spread with a rapidity which showed how combustible were the materials on which it fed. In its new shape the quarrel began to connect itself with party traditions, if not with political watchwords. The official leaders of the old Guelph party were afraid that the Ghibellines might reassert their claims in the chaos and confusion of the time. They sent to the Pope, Boniface VIII., for counsel and support, and in the month of June, 1300, he despatched the Cardinal dell' Acquasparta to arrange matters. When he arrived Dante was in office as one of the *Priori* of the Guilds, and short as his tenure of it was (it lasted but for two months, from the 15th of June to the 15th of August), it was to him, as he himself says, 'the beginning of all the troubles of his life.' It may be that he clearly felt and showed his profound distrust and scorn for the Pope's character, and that this led him, in conjunction with his colleagues, to decline acceding to the Cardinal's proposals. As it was, they adopted a policy of their own. The heads of the Donati (the *Neri*) party, were imprisoned in the Castello della Piove, those of the Cerchi in Serrazzano. Among the latter was the Guido Cavalcanti who had been the poet's earliest friend and the companion of his studies.

The step which he thus took drew upon the poet's head the vindictive hatred of Donati and his party, and forced him against his will into the position of a partizan. Cavalcanti and others of the same side obtained leave to return from their exile, on the ground of ill-health, and although Dante was out of office at the time, it was whispered that it was owing to his influence and that he was in alliance with the *Bianchi*. Some months afterwards the *Neri* too returned, and took more active measures for crushing their opponents. The arrival of Charles of Valois, in 1301, recalled the precedent of 1266, when Charles of njou had been invited to take the leadership of the Guelph party against the Ghibellines, and the *Neri* held a meeting in the Church of the Holy Trinity, and decided on asking him to come, backed with the Pope's authority, as a pacificator, and so to settle matters in their favour. To do this they had to give a new colour to the quarrel. The party of the *Bianchi* were represented as tainted with Ghibellinism. As regards some of them, traders, like the Cerchi, rich and easy-going, the type, as some thought, of those whom the poet scorns as '*A Dio spiacenti ed a nemici sui*,' the charge probably meant only that they wished for a quiet life, and would not join in extreme measures against the remnant of the Ghibellines. As regards the poet, who was the one man with power of thought and will among their opponents, there were stronger grounds for the imputation. It is, we believe, unjust to his memory, and shows a want of insight into his character, to assume that the political theories of the 'De Monarchiâ' were an after-thought forced upon him by the necessities of his position and by intercourse with expatriated Ghibellines. It is far more in harmony with the intense idealism of his nature to believe that he had already worked out for himself a view of the relations of the Church and the Empire, which was not that of popular Guelphism, that he had brooded over this, and perhaps given utterance to it. The minutes of the

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Council of the Hundred for June, 1301, show, at all events, that he took even then an attitude of resolute opposition to the Pope who at that time filled the throne of St. Peter. The Cardinal dell' Acquasparta had in the course of his negotiations asked the citizens of Florence to supply the Pope with 100 soldiers. The proposal was laid before the Council of the Hundred on the morning of the 18th. The Secretary records briefly the line taken by each speaker. '*Dante Alagherii consuluit quod de servitio faciendo domino Papæ nihil fiat.*' He met with no support, but the question was adjourned for a few hours, in order to take an unanimous vote on another question. At a second meeting on the same day, the subject was again mooted, and again we find the same record: '*Dante Alagherii consuluit quod de servitio faciendo domino Papæ nihil fiat.*' The division followed, and he was left in a minority of 32 against 48. The rest of the party acquiesced in what seemed a necessary result of this, that money should be voted for the expenses of the troops so sent. But the votes were registered, and there was one still given in the negative. Is it too much to think that it was that of the indomitable and now solitary leader of the opposition?

If we see in the vividness of the picture which Dante draws of the crowds at Rome during the jubilee, evidence that the poet had seen them with his own eyes, it would follow that in the negotiations which were carried on in the previous year (1300) he had already gone as ambassador to Rome, and there learned to hate the subtlety and baseness of the reigning Pontiff. In the month of September the *Priori* then in office had recourse in their perplexity to another embassy, and Dante was sent to Rome with three others, possibly with the hope that he might bring about some amicable arrangement; possibly also to get out of the way one whose independence might have been inconvenient in the execution of the schemes which the *Neri* were maturing. The words which Boccaccio records as spoken at this time, and in which he sees only an enormous egotism—'If I go, who is there to remain? If I remain, who is there to go?'—speak, we believe, much more of the sense of isolation which he felt with increasing bitterness, as of one whom neither party understood and who could himself put no trust in either. The ambassadors arrived in Rome. The Pope made declarations of his peaceful intentions, but demanded unqualified submission. Two out of the four were sent back for fresh instructions. Dante remained behind. In the mean time the *coup-d'état* was effected. The French prince appeared, with loud professions of his devotion to the Church, his wish for peace, his love of Florence. The Pope had sent him as lord and pacificator of the city. The force with which he came, and the predominance of the *Neri* in the city itself, forbade resistance. The Council did all it could in stipulating that he should exercise no jurisdiction, do no violence, respect the existing constitution. He swallowed all that was demanded of him. As soon as he was admitted the promises were thrown to the winds. The looks and words of Charles were sullen and threatening. The *Priori* as a last resource sent to instruct Dante to endeavour to persuade the Pope to send the Cardinal de Montefiore as a pacificator in the room of Charles. The *Neri*, however, lost no time. Donati led his forces to the gate of the city, broke it down, was joined by his partizans within the town, broke open the prisons, and began the work of massacre, plunder, and destruction. Charles, who was encamped on the other side of the Arno, looked on with indifference. The *Bianchi* fled in terror.

What had begun in open violence was carried on under the form of legal action. Cante de Gubbio was elected as Podesta with dictatorial power, and Dante, with three other leading members of his party, was condemned (January 27, 1302) without a trial, without any evidence but vague rumour ('publicâ famâ referente'), on the charges (1) of corrupt dealings during his two months' term of office as one of the *Priori;* (2) of opposition to the Pope, and Charles, and the Guelph party generally. He and those who were accused with him were fined five thousand florins each, and if the fines were not paid within three days their personal property was to be destroyed, and their lands confiscated. They were banished for two years, and excluded for life from all public office. On the 10th of March another decree was issued of almost unexampled ferocity. Dante and his companions were condemned afresh as contumacious. If they ever appeared within the walls of Florence they were to be burnt alive.

We enter now on the dreary history of homeless wandering, and wretched poverty, and fruitless conspiracy, and vain dreams, which made up the remainder of the Poet's outward life. Happily it was relieved by the kindness of many friends, by his own lofty nature, by the opportunities which he found in the midst of all his troubles for carrying on the studies in which he, for a time, forgot them; we may add also, by the memory of Beatrice, and the vision of the unseen world into which that memory had

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ripened. The suffering was sharp enough; but the biographers of the poet have failed to note the significance of the fact that it is not to this period that the 'Divina Commedia' points as the time of his greatest misery. It is at least probable, according to Boccaccio's statement, that the first seven cantos were written before his exile. But, whether written before or after, they refer the perplexity and wretchedness of which they speak to the time that immediately preceded his term of office, when outwardly he seemed entering on a career of political activity. It was *then*, at the age of thirty-five, when he was still at Florence, that his whole life seemed to him a chaos and a mistake—the wood dark, and the way lost; then that he strove and in vain to rise above the confusions of his time; then that the faults of his own life, reproduced in the vices of these around him, seemed to bar all progress. And then it was also, if we accept the obvious meaning of the opening canto of the 'Inferno,' that the work of liberation and discipline began. The poet, whose words had, from youth upwards, seemed to him faultless in their beauty and their harmony, in whose great epic he read his own thoughts as to the greatness of Italy, and the true form of its polity, and the methods of Divine retribution, became for him a παιδαγωγὸς εἰς Χριστὸν, the representative of human wisdom as leading to the knowledge of Divine Truth. So it was that when the time of suffering came he was prepared to meet it, and to profit by its teaching.

On hearing of the success of the *Neri* at Florence, his first step was to leave Rome, and to meet the exiles of his own party, who had found refuge in Sienna. They met in a castle belonging to the Ubertini at Gargonza, and in February or March, A.D. 1302, determined to ally themselves with the remnant of the old Ghibelline party, and to make Arezzo their headquarters. Count Alessandro di Romana was chosen as their commander, Dante as one of a Council of Twelve to act with him. To him, as we have seen, the change was not an act of sudden tergiversation, forced upon him by the necessities of his position. He had long felt that the Guelph theory was one-sided, and that, in practice, it led only to the war of factions, in which all reverence for law, and all hopes of peace, were sure to perish. It does not follow that he found much to sympathise with in his new allies. With them Ghibellinism, in its opposition to the Pope, meant also opposition to the Church and its teaching, an Epicurean indifference or open scorn towards the theology which, to his mind, was the crown of all human wisdom. To be in contact with such men was a perpetual irritation. It was bad enough to know—

> '*Come sa di sale*
> *Lo pane altrui, e com' è duro calle*
> *Lo scendere e il salir per l'altrui scale.*'

It was far worse to live with that '*compagnia malvagia e scempia*,' '*matta e impia*,' with whom he now found himself associated. To this, however, there were some exceptions. The Podesta of Arezzo, Uguccione della Faggiuola, recognised his greatness, and showed himself for many years his constant friend. To him, in 1309, the poet dedicated the 'Inferno.' With him he found shelter first at Montefeltro, and then at Lucca. To him he owed his introduction to the hospitality of the Scaligeri at Verona. Whether he paid his first visit to them under Bartolomeo in 1303, or Alboino in 1308, or Can Grande (the youngest of the three brothers) in 1314, must remain one of the questions which depend on a doubtful reading, and the yet more doubtful theories of commentators.

In the mean time some attempts were made to bring about an adjustment. Benedict XI., who succeeded Boniface VIII. in 1303, sent Cardinal Niccola degli Albertini to Florence as a pacificator. The *Bianchi*, under Romana and his twelve councillors, promised to abstain from all offensive movements. The *Neri*, however, were impracticable. They got rid of the cardinal; they cared little for his appeals and remonstrances, little even for his interdict. An attempt was made by the exiles to force an entrance into the city, with nine thousand infantry and six hundred horse, and it failed utterly, and brought with it the abandonment of all hopes of any immediate change for the better. The party was broken up. Dante for two years (1304–6) wandered '*peregrino quasi mendicando*,' drifting like 'a ship without sails and without a helm,' from place to place, from Arezzo to Casentino, Montefeltro, Forli, Bologna. The last-named city had attractions for one to whom the *consolatio philosophiæ* was at all times the most healing of all balms for the soul's wounds and sores. There he would seem to have passed some months, attending lectures in theology, and, with his characteristic fondness for linguistic studies, noting the peculiarities of its dialect. He was not permitted, however, to enjoy this comparative ease for more than a few months. In March, 1306, the people of Bologna, urged by the *Neri* of Florence, expelled him and his party. Cardinal Orsini, sent from Avignon by Clement V., in vain attempted to bring about their return; and, on their refusal, in addition to the customary excommu-

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nication, closed the University. The exiles were thus all but driven to another warlike movement. They contracted (Dante's name appears as one of the parties to the agreement) with one of the Ubaldini for the occupation of the castle of the Montaccianico, in which they had taken refuge, and gave him an indemnity against all injuries it might sustain in consequence. The ill fate of the party followed them here also. Their host found he could make a better bargain with the *Neri*, sold his castle to them for fifteen thousand florins, and was content to see it pulled to pieces by the Florentines. More wanderings followed. In August, 1306, he was at Padua; in October at Lunigiana, with the family of the Malaspine. Here, as at Montefeltro, he found warm and steadfast friends. The Marquis Moroello employed him to negotiate a treaty of peace with the Bishop of Luni, with whom there had been a long-standing quarrel, and the magnificent panegyric on their house in the 'Purgatorio' (canto viii.) shows that he had enjoyed their hospitality before 1307. A letter which is extant, addressed to Moroello in that or the following year, shows that he was once again on the banks of the Arno, probably at Casentino, and there formed a short-lived attachment to a lady, who suited, as he says, 'his principles, his habits, and his fortune.' A somewhat doubtful story in 'Boccaccio's Memoir' relates that Gemma, who had remained all this time in Florence, took occasion to urge her claim to the goods which had been sequestrated at the time of her husband's banishment, and that, on searching his papers, with the help of his nephew Andrea, they found what turned out to be the first seven cantos of the 'Commedia.' They took it to Dino di Frescobaldi, as a judge of such things; and he, appreciating its excellence, sent it to the Marquis Moroello, with whom Dante was known to be staying. At his entreaty, the story goes on, the work which had been not only interrupted, but forgotten, was resumed. The first part, finished in 1309, was sent by him through Hilario, the Prior of Santa Croce di Corvo, to his first benefactor, Uguccione della Faggiuola. The second was inscribed in 1311 to Moroello.

At this period his travels took a further range. When he had stayed at the Monastery of Santa Croce, and had been asked what he wanted, his answer was in one word, 'Peace, peace.' This was yet to seek. Despairing, it may be, of any successful issue to the efforts of his party; out of harmony with most of its members; eager, with the old enthusiasm of his youth, to fill up what was lacking in his knowledge of theology, he went to the University of Paris, and appeared there, after the fashion of the time, partly as a student, partly as a disputant. There he must have found the immediate successors of Bonaventura and Thomas Aquinas, some who had listened to Albert the Great, some who, like Roger Bacon and his friend Peter de Maharncuria a few years before, were pursuing their inquiries in another direction, reading Averroes and Avicenna, and studying optics and astronomy. We can hardly doubt that, over and above the indication of personal acquaintance with the teachers at Paris, and the very streets in which they lectured, which we find in the 'Paradiso' (x. 137), it was there that the knowledge which makes the 'Commedia' almost an encyclopædia of mediæval science became more full-orbed and systematic. There are good grounds, we think, in spite of the discredit thrown on the statement by most recent biographers, for believing that his desire for completeness brought him to our own shores, and that the face of the Florentine exile was seen for a brief period in the lecture-rooms of Oxford. If vivid description be accepted as evidence of personal knowledge, he had seen the country in the neighbourhood of Bruges, the route which a traveller bound for England would naturally take ('Inf.,' xv. 1–6). The fact is alluded to by Boccaccio, who was intimately acquainted with Dante's nephew, and must have known many of his contemporaries.* It is mentioned as a well-known fact but a century later by Giovanni da Seravalle, Bishop of Fermo, who wrote a Commentary on the 'Commedia.' Internal circumstantial evidence strengthens this direct testimony. He touches on persons and places connected with English history, with the living interest of one who has seen them near at hand. The story of the deadly feud between Henry II. and his son John, of the murder of Henry III.'s nephew (Henry, son of Richard of Cornwall) at Viterbo, and how the heart of the murdered man was held in honour on the banks of the Thames (*sc.* on the shrine of Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey), the character of Henry III. himself as '*il rè della simplice vita*,' — of Edward I. as warlike and successful, and plunging into wars with Scotland;—even his mention of a writer so thoroughly English as the Venerable Bede;—all this, though it does not prove, at least enters into this circumstantial evidence in favour of, the tradition. It is interesting to remember that, if this were so, he must have been there within eighteen

* Boccaccio does not name it, it is true, in his 'Life of Dante,' but in the Latin verses which he sent to Petrarch with a copy of the 'Commedia,' he speaks of him as having visited

'Parisios dudum, *extremosque Britannos*.'

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years after the death of Roger Bacon, and eight after that of Duns Scotus, that William of Ockham and Bredwardine were then in full activity as teachers. No traces of their teaching, it is true, are to be found in any of his writings. Nor was this to be expected. His stay was, in any case, too short for him to come under their influence. His mind had been trained under the philosophical system to which they were opposed. They were Nominalists; he was, in the mediæval sense of the term, essentially Realistic. The teachers to whom he looked for guidance were Bernard, and Bonaventura, and Aquinas.

He was recalled from Oxford or from Paris by a change in the political position of Italy, which filled him for a brief time with visionary hopes, and left him to a blank disappointment. The first two Emperors of the House of Hapsburgh, Rudolph (1273) and Albert (1298), had taken but little interest in the affairs of Italy. They had never come to Monza or Rome to be crowned, had never even crossed its borders, had left their Ghibelline supporters to their fate. In the election which followed on Albert's death in 1308, the efforts of Philip the Fair to secure the imperial crown for his brother Charles (the Charles of the Neri *coup d'état*) roused the activity, not only of the old Imperialist party, but also of all who did not wish to see the removal of the Papacy to Avignon followed up by the complete absorption of all Italian independence in the hands of Philip. The result was the election of Henry of Luxemburgh in November, 1308. For two years, however, he remained in Germany. In the autumn of 1310 he crossed the Alps, and on January 6th, 1311, the iron crown was placed upon his brow at Milan. The news of his arrival reached Paris, and the heart of Dante thrilled with a fresh hope. In the support which Clement V. had given to the new Emperor he saw the promise of a new peace, the close of the long strife which had set Emperors against Popes and Popes against Emperors, the recognition of the principle that Peter and Cæsar were to reign, each supreme in his own province, in harmonious sovereignty. In a letter which reminds us at once of Milton's addresses to the Lords and Commons of England, and Mazzini's manifestoes to the people of Italy, he called on his countrymen, kings, dukes, marquises, senators, people, to bow before the new Moses, to see in him at once their sovereign and their liberator. Italy was to dry her tears. Parties were to forget their animosities. The acceptable time had come. The sun of peace and righteousness had risen.

There was much in the character of Henry — courage, calmness, impartiality — to justify these hopes. He sought to hold the balance even between Guelphs and Ghibellines. He had in speech and manner the charm of a frank, benignant courtesy. In this instance personal contact had given a substance to the dreams of the idealist. The poet had knelt at the feet of the Emperor and kissed his hands. But the dreams were destined to be rudely broken. The Florentines refused to hear the voice of the charmer, made a fresh alliance with Robert King of Naples (he had succeeded Charles in 1309), and prepared themselves for resistance. Other cities joined them. The unity of Italy, the ideal polity, the kingdom after God's will, ran a risk of being thwarted once again by the perversity of men. The indignation of Dante's soul on hearing the ill-boding news was proportionate to the glowing hopes to which he had given utterance. He wrote another letter, as in a prolonged scream of wrath, to the '*Sceleratissimi Fiorentini*.' He sets forth his theory of government once more, rebukes their hardness of heart, threatens them, as one who sees the future unveiled, with utter destruction. For them and their children there was nothing left but death or exile. Their city would pass into the hands of strangers. The vengeance which Barbarossa had wreaked on Milan would be a light thing compared with that which they would suffer at the hands of Henry.

Whatever other element of the prophetic character may be claimed for Dante, that of provision was at all events absent. The reply which the citizens of Florence made to his menacing epistle was simply to exclude him and the other more violent members of his party from an amnesty which allowed many of the exiles to return. More difficulties gathered round the Emperor's cause. The cities of Lombardy, Mantua, Bergamo, Cremona, rose against him and delayed the progress of his armies towards the south. Dante and the other Ghibellines grew impatient of delay. He poured out the bitterness of his soul in a letter to Henry. He and his had sat long enough by the waters of Babylon. They had hailed the dawning of a brighter day. Dante himself had even said, 'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world.' Now they were compelled to ask, 'Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?' Why should he who might claim lordship over the world, as wide as that of Augustus, linger on the banks of the Po? When he might be as another Æneas, why should he risk the fate of him who lost his high calling because he spared the sinners the Amalekites? As in accents hoarse with rage, he calls him to slay the she-fox that had her den in Florence. In

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that city he saw the viper that was to be crushed, the Myrrha who sought an incestuous union with her own spiritual father, the tainted sheep that was spreading a murrain through the flock, the Goliath of the host of the Philistines.

We cannot wonder the Emperor refused to follow the counsels of one who must have seemed to him as a dreamer of dreams rather than a politician. Instead of marching upon Florence he went to Genoa, then to Pisa, then to Rome for his coronation on June 29th. Five months later he began his march through Umbria and laid siege to Florence. But the citizens had had time to prepare for his approach. Their forces surpassed his own. He did not venture on an assault, and raised the siege in November. In the summer of the following year he was attacked by fever in the Maremma, died (August 24, 1313), and was buried in the Campo Santo at Pisa.

So passed away from the poet's grasp the hot dream of the triumph of his ideas, of return to the city which he loved, of revenge sharp and signal on the citizens whom he hated. The life of wandering poverty began again with a deeper sense of despondency. In time, if we take the 'Paradiso' as reflecting his inner life, he passed to a clearer vision, learnt to acquiesce in the inevitable, accepted the failure of his schemes, lived more in the unseen. The house of a friend at Gubbio (Raffael Beccene) and the monastery of Fonte Avellano, illustrious as having been the dwelling of St. Peter Damiani, near that city, gave him a resting-place for a large portion of the years 1313–1315. In the intervening year the death of Clement V. brought with it another short-lived delusion. He had failed in bringing about his ideal polity from the imperial side. There might yet be a chance on the side of the Pontiff. Peter might achieve what Cæsar had been foiled in. If there could only be a true Pope, an Italian, ruling at Rome, instead of a Frenchman at Avignon — one who should feel that he owed his success not to the Guelphs of Florence, but to the exiled Ghibellines — then there might yet be hope. The Cardinals were intriguing and hesitating in conclave at Carpentiers. Was he not called to stir them up to their true policy? To them accordingly he wrote (July 14, 1314), urging them to have pity on the 'city that sat solitary, the 'widowed queen of the nations.' His language does not show much hope or desire of conciliating them. He tells them that they burn strange fire on the altar, that they are like those that sold doves in the Temple. If they spoke of him as an Uzzah, laying profane hands on th[illegible] that what he dealt with was not the ark, but the oxen that kicked against the pricks. His was the one voice that spoke in the desolation of the Church. They were leaving the old Fathers, and giving themselves to wretched commentaries on the Decretals. But those who had grown up on the banks of the Tiber (Orsini and the Italian Cardinals) might yet retrieve themselves; they might, with one accord, contend in the coming struggle for Rome and Italy as the spouse of Christ, and leave the Gascons (the Provençal and French Cardinals) to everlasting shame.

The thunderbolt proved to be a '*telum imbelle*.' The Italian Cardinals were overpowered by force or driven away. The Papal chair remained vacant for two years, and then the French party succeeded in electing the Bishop of Avignon under the title of John XXII. Some consolation might, perhaps, be found in the temporary success of the Ghibellines under the poet's friend Uguccione della Faggiuola, which enabled him in the latter months of 1314 to offer him an asylum at Lucca, that city having fallen into his hands. Here accordingly Dante remained for some months, and seems to have found some comfort for his sorrow in the beauty or the sympathy of the Gentucca, to whose name he has given a place in the twenty-fourth Canto of the 'Purgatorio.' The Florentines in the mean time, alarmed at the growing strength of their opponents, sent to their allies for reinforcements. The two armies encountered at Montecatini (August 6, 1315), and the Guelphs were defeated with great loss. Four months afterwards, as if retaliating on one whom they looked on as the chief agent in all the Ghibelline movements (November, 1315), the Commune of Florence again sentenced Dante to immediate execution if he ever appeared on their territory, and he and his sons (the addition of their names is significant) were outlawed. They might be outraged or murdered with impunity. A few months afterwards another change in the state of parties at Lucca withdrew that city from the control of Uguccione, and Dante lost the asylum which it had given him.

It seems probable that he was again sheltered by Malaspina at Lunigiana. In 1316 the Florentines, no longer alarmed, and therefore disposed to try milder measures, gave him and his fellow exiles an opportunity of returning. But it was on conditions which he could not accept without degradation. To pay a fine, to appear in public in the dress of a penitent carrying a wax taper, to go in procession to the church of San Giovanni: this was what Florence demanded of her greatest citizen, and to this he could not stoop. Much

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as he loved the city of his birth, he would never enter it at all unless in a more honourable way. Could he not 'look upon the sun and the stars, and meditate on Divine truth everywhere?' Had he not learned to take his place among those to whom the 'whole world is their fatherland'? In the consciousness of his innocence he was content to wait and take the chances of the future. For a little while those chances seemed to smile on him. The youngest of the three Scaligeri, whose regard he had probably won on his former visit to Verona in 1309, had now succeeded to the signory of that city by his brother's death; and on Dante's arrival there (probably on some diplomatic business of Uguccione's), he was received with warm and courteous welcome. Here, if we accept the well-known passage in the speech of Cacciaguida ('Parad.' xvii. 70), wholly or in part, as referring to this period, he found himself for the first time in something like a home. His eldest son came to live with him. Giotto came in 1317 to Padua to paint the chapel of the Scrovigni, and the two friends there or at Verona were able to renew their intercourse. It was a popular tradition that the painter once again introduced the portrait of the poet into one of his groups substituting for the orange which he bears in the Bargello picture, the pomegranate, which, by some strange process of association, as in the story of Proserpine, had become symbolical of Hades. In the first flush of gratitude and hope caused by Can Grande's reception of him, Dante dedicated to him the 'Paradiso,' which he was then writing; and to this we owe an exposition of the plan and purpose of the whole poem, which is to the 'Divina Commedia' what Spenser's letter to Sir Philip Sydney is to the 'Faery Queen.'

It is satisfactory to think that the memory of both poet and patron has been relieved from the reproach thrown on it by the gossip which Boccaccio and Petrarch retailed as history. It is possible enough that the self-absorbed, lofty, sensitive nature of the exile may have led to some sharp passages with the courtiers and jesters of Can Grande's palace, or even with Can Grande himself. The dreamy abstraction which led him to sit or stand motionless for hours would seem to them as madness.* They would point to him as the man who had seen Hell, and had not recovered from its horrors. He in his turn would scorn the sympathy in folly which bound them together, and tell the patron of buffoons and fools that, 'like loves like.' But there is no ground for believing that their friendship passed into alienation, or that Dante had to leave Verona and to seek a refuge once more in Casentino or Fonte Avellana. It is true that about this period we find him at Mantua, present at a discussion on the sphericity of the earth, in which, as in all like questions, he was much interested; but the thesis which rose out of the discussion was read by him in the chapel of St. Helena at Verona, in January, 1320, in the presence of nearly all the clergy of that city. The panegyric on the Scaligeri in the 'Paradiso,' and the fact that he sent the cantos as they were written for Can Grande's perusal, must be admitted as evidence of the continuance of friendly relations between them.

This seems, however, to have been his last public appearance there. The fame of Guido da Polenta (nephew of the Francesca whom the fifth canto of the 'Inferno' has immortalised) as a munificent friend to literature and men of letters, attracted him to Ravenna a little later in the year just named. He found there all the kindness for which he looked, and evidence came to him from other quarters that, in spite of his poverty and exile, he was already permitted to enjoy a foretaste of that perennial fame after which he had thirsted from his youth. Giovanni del Virgilio, one of the leading men of letters of Bologna, wrote, partly to reprove him for deserting Latin and writing in the common 'vulgar' tongue, but partly also to invite him (this implies obviously the assent of others) to come to that city and receive the crown of laurel which it was ready to bestow on him. His answer showed that he had risen above the desire for the poor honour of such a distinction, that his heart was still in Florence, though he would not purchase his return to it at the price of degradation. In no other city would he receive the poet's wreath, now that his hair was white, than in that in which it had once been golden. The great work on which he had laboured for so many years, which had made him old and haggard before his time, was now drawing to a close; and the hope which he utters in the 'Paradiso'* (c. xxv.) amounted probably to an

* The same thing was recorded of the great schoolmen whom Dante held in honour, Francis of Assisi and Thomas of Aquinas, and had been related, of old, of Socrates.

* 'Should it e'er chance that this high song divine
To which both Heaven and Earth their hands have set,
So that long years it made me waste and pine
Should tame the sternness which excludes me yet
From that fair field where I in infancy
Slept, lamb-like foe of wolves that it beset,
With other voice and other fleece will I
Forthwith as poet enter, and will take
The laurel wreath my font of baptism nigh.'

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expectation that it would one day lead his own countrymen to recognise his worth, to forgive the past, and to give him the wreath of glory in the selfsame church in which he had been dipped in the baptismal waters.

The end was not far off. Not many months after this correspondence, in 1321, he was sent by his new patron to negotiate a treaty of peace with the Republic of Venice. Such a treaty was, we know, agreed to and signed in the following year; and it is a natural inference that he must have had, at least, some share in bringing it about. For himself personally, however, the result was one of disappointment. In a letter to Guido da Polenta, which is probably authentic, though mis-dated, he complains bitterly of his disappointment. An elaborate Latin oration was cut short before he had finished his exordium, and he was told to speak as those did to whom he was sent, in the vulgar tongue. The few words which he then uttered (we can imagine them sufficiently bitter and haughty) met with hardly a better reception. He begged that he might never again be sent on such a task to such a people. They in their turn seem to have been irritable and suspicious, and refused him permission to return to Ravenna by sea, lest he should win over the Admiral of their fleet (who had plenary powers for peace or war) to inconvenient concessions. He, accordingly, had to take the land route, caught a marsh fever, and died shortly after his return to Ravenna, on the 14th of September, 1321.

So passed away the poet-prophet of the fourteenth century, 'not without honour, save in his own country and in his father's house.' Friends, patrons, praises, these he found abundantly, but he was to the last an exile without a home, vexed with hot thoughts, brooding over dreams which were never to be realised. For good and for evil, the sorrows of his life left their impress on the great work with which his name is identified. They at once purified and embittered him. In the midst of an age of licence, when half the men of letters of his time were writing verses more or less sensuously erotic, they kept him free from any touch of sensuousness. They gave to his condemnation of evil, embodied, as he represented it to himself, in his personal and political antagonists, a pitiless ferocity which has hardly a parallel in literature. High as he stands among the supreme poets of the world, we cannot class him with those whose art has led them to a serene, healthy tranquillity, in which, the emotions of past years being left behind,—forgotten, or treated only as part of the education of the artist,—the mind lives for its art only, adapts itself easily to the outward circumstances of its life, and finds an artist's pleasure in bringing its work to perfection. Such, beyond doubt, were Sophocles, Shakespeare, Goethe. Such, if in the absence of all biography, we may draw an inference from the poems that pass under his name, must have been Homer. 'Sweetness and light,' in the sense in which they have been represented as conditions of the highest culture, were not the heritage of the great Florentine. But there is another class of minds in whom, as in Dante, Milton, and Lucretius, art, however noble, is subordinate to the passionate love of truth in other regions than those of art, and to the belief that they have found it. The prophetic character in such men predominates over the æsthetic. They have schemes of polity which no statesman will accept, which aim at an ideal nobleness; and for these they are content to suffer. In those who oppose them they can see nothing but blindness and baseness. Art has not brought to them, as to the others, the lessons of tolerance and the wisdom of accepting the inevitable. The poetry of our own time has but little of this character to leaven it; and we find, accordingly, the analogues of the Dante temperament not among them, but among idealists of another class. We are tempted to name a writer of our own whose repute is that of a theologian rather than a poet—John Henry Newman, as presenting, in most respects, a striking parallel. No writer of our own age has been more thoroughly imbued with the scholastic theology which pervades every page of the 'Divina Commedia,' or embraced it with a more intense conviction. Those who know his 'Apologia' will see in it, if we mistake not, something analogous (in all but the entire absence of a Beatrice) to the 'Vita Nuova' and the 'De Monarchia.' There is the same unveiling of the secrets of the heart, the same pursuit of an ideal Church and an ideal State. Those who are familiar with the less-known poems which he contributed to the 'Lyra Apostolica,' or with the more recent 'Dream of Gerontius,' can scarcely fail to see in them touches for which no other word than Dantesque can well be found. Tender affection and prophetic sternness, subtle thought and vivid speech, the mingling of beauty, horror, grotesqueness in his vision of the unseen world—these all remind us of the great poem in which the Florentine portrayed what lies 'behind the veil.' And here too, as far as we can judge, the resemblance is not due to derivation. We do not recollect that there is any trace in Dr. Newman's writings that his mind ever came (even in the degree in which most students of mediæval literature have felt it) under the spell of the great Italian.

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We trust that we shall not be thought to be treading on holier ground with an undue boldness, if we follow up a hint thrown out by Professor Plumptre in Dr. Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' and suggest a parallelism in character, and to some extent even in style, between the prophet of Anathoth and the seer of Florence. The contest between the Egyptian and Chaldæan parties in Jerusalem was as bitter as that between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, between the *Neri* and *Bianchi*. Each clung to the faith in which he had been brought up, each saw in the priests and princes of his time those by whom that faith was corrupted and destroyed. Each at times all but gave way under the sense of a burden too heavy to be borne. Each was sustained by a vision of restored unity and righteous sovereignty. Each was plotted against and persecuted by his friends and countrymen, and met their attacks with the sharp words of a spirit intensely sensitive. It was characteristic of both that they deliberately chose for the utterance of their strongest emotions forms that were difficult, complicated, artificial;* that they rejected no word or image that did its work effectually, however mean or trivial it might seem to others. It is, at least, significant that there is no book in the whole Bible to which Dante turns so frequently, as if drawn by the secret spell of an unconscious affinity, as to the Prophecy of Jeremiah. The opening vision of the wolf, the panther, and the lion, with all its manifold meanings, ethical, spiritual, political, comes from the words in which the prophet had spoken (v. 6) of the army of the Chaldæans, interpreted as those words were by the exegesis of the Middle Ages. When he is crushed to the ground by the death of his beloved Beatrice in the 'Vita Nuova,' his sorrow utters itself in the opening words of the Lamentations. He takes the same words as the motto for a letter to the chief citizens of Florence, and long years afterwards for that which he addressed to the Cardinals at Avignon. He quotes from the prophet once again in his letters to Henry of Luxemburgh. We own that, as we trace his life, it helps us to understand that of his greater prototype, and when we endeavour to picture to ourselves the features and the expression of the prophet of Anathoth when he began his work in earliest youth, or when he was worn out before his time with sorrow and contention, there rises before us a pale, half-dreamy, half-fiery face, deepening from melancholy to sternness, such as was traced by the pencil of Giotto or reproduced from the plaster-cast of Ravenna.

It has been the tendency of many minds who follow Mazzini in his reverence for Dante to see in him one who was in another sense as a prophet, aiming at an ideal Italy which they, the patriots and republicans of our own time, are bent on realising. The language in which he speaks of Rome as the natural seat of sovereignty attracts those who are either ready to embark in the wildest enterprises to make themselves masters of that city, or look forward to possessing it, as the capital of Italy, from the slower process of internal decay and diplomatic combinations. They deceive themselves, however, if they fancy that their dreams are as his dreams. No vision of a free Church in a free State entered into his hopes for the future of Italy. What he brooded over was the vision of a universal monarchy, a restored Roman Empire ruling over the human race by divine right, all kings and people doing homage to the Emperor. To the power of that monarch in things secular there was to be no limit. Side by side with that authority there was to be a spiritual despotism as absolute over the conscience and the intellect of men, chastising heresy and licence; and to it in its own province, as the secular arm executing its behests, the Emperor himself was to be subordinate. How harmony was to be maintained, in what way the idea was to be realised, what was to happen when the two powers came into collision—about these details, he, in the profound ideolatry of his nature, did not trouble himself. His boundary lines between the two powers might differ from those of the ecclesiastical rulers of his time; he might protest against the dotation of Constantine as polluting the purely spiritual authority of the pontiff and robbing the supreme civil power of a part of its territory and jurisdiction; he might point the finger of scorn against the vices of individual pontiffs who had roused his antipathy, but the polity which he framed for himself was not less irrational and visionary than that which rested on Boniface's analogy of the two lights set in the firmament of heaven. Could we think of it as ever becoming a historical reality, it would unite the worst evils of sacerdotalism and imperialism.

It is no less idle to attempt to make of Dante a prophet of the freer thoughts which lay in the far future, a Reformer before the Reformation. Whatever condemnation he may pass on individual popes, there is no *spirito antipapale*, such as men have dreamt

* Compare Jeremiah's use (1) of the *acrostic* structure in his Lamentations, passing in ch. iii. into a triplet of verses under each letter of the Hebrew alphabet; and (2) of the *Athbash*, or cypher of an inverted alphabet, in which Sheshach in ch. xxv. 26, li. 41, became the equivalent of Babel, with Dante's employment (1) of the complicated *terza rima;* and (2) of enigmas like that of the '*Veltro*' in 'Infern.' i. 101, and the D.V.X. in 'Purgat.' xxxiii. 45.'

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of, permeating his great poem. If he maintains that, not the traditions of the Church, but the Old and New Testaments, are the '*fundamentum fidei*,' it is as against the Decretals, not as against the doctrinal systems of his time. In theological as in political thought he is essentially mediæval, behind the bolder thinkers of his age (such as Roger Bacon), rather than in advance of any. His Mariolatry is as passionate as that of Bernard. He limits the possibility of salvation to those who are members of the visible Church on earth. Even the gates of purgatory are closed to the noblest heathen and to unbaptised infants. The 'sweet Master' who led his footsteps through the unseen world is to remain for ever '*senza speme*' in the yearnings of unsatisfied desire. With him, as in the popular story embodied in the 'Golden Legend,' Trajan is the one heathen who by the intercession of a saint has passed through the gates of Paradise. Dominic and Francis of Assisi and Bernard are his highest patterns of Christian excellence, Albert the Great and Aquinas his inexhaustible treasure-house of Christian wisdom. And accordingly he stands before us as a typical representative of that theology of the past in its evil as well as in its good.* There is a capacity for ecstatic devotion; an intense appreciation of the beauty of purity; a profound sense of the soothing, purifying influence of sacred music and song; a freedom from all sensuous thoughts of the blessedness of heaven, such as thrill, strengthen, ennoble us. But with this, and in a degree equally transcending what later centuries have known, there is the relentlessness, the ferocity, the cruelty, which were the special characteristic of mediæval thought as well as of mediæval action. The temptation which lies before one who undertakes to be an interpreter of the divine judgments is at all times perilous, and in that age and with a character so intensely self-concentrated as was Dante's, it was all but fatal. If in some cases, as in that of Brunetto Latini, we trace a struggle of emotion, and may ascribe the condemnation which he passes to a profound sense of righteousness, triumphing over personal emotions — yet, for the most part, his enemies become to him as God's enemies; those whom he places in the depths of Hell are the men who have thwarted and oppressed him in the political intrigues of Florence. With a remorseless fierceness which has hardly a parallel in literature (Tertullian's magnificent and terrible apostrophe, perhaps, comes nearest to it) he represents himself as beholding with satisfaction the torments of his friends and neighbours. He adds to their misery by taunts, mocks, false promises, and brutal cruelty.* Our flesh creeps as we read the words which betray a temper more utterly evil than any sin which he condemns. In another sense than that of which he dreamt he was indeed passing through an Inferno, knowing by a terrible experience, as a transition stage in his life, the evil passions which make the soul a hell.

Happily, we may believe that it was only a transition stage. He commenced his great work in the midst of conflict; he continued and finished the first part of it in the early years of his exile. He gave it the strange name which has been the *crux* of commentators, because it began in darkness and horror and ended in the brightness of the blessed. Then the wounds were fresh and the smart keen, and the passions which they raised hot, and he vented his antipathies as we have seen. But by a happy parallelism, as time passed on, his plan led him away from the regions of dark horrors to those of purification and of joy, and the society of new friends tempered in some degree the bitterness of exile, and, like the blind king at Colonos, he had learnt the lesson of endurance and had gained the 'stout heart' that bears them with patience and serenity. Bursts of passion there might be, as we have seen, at moments of excitement, when new projects kindled wild hopes; but these were more transitory, and no longer found utterance in the same measure in his poem. There is, if we mistake not, a mystic significance, obviously intentional, in the fact, that each part of the great 'Commedia' ends with the self-same word, and the difference in the context in which it stands illustrates the progress of which we have been speaking. When he leaves the gloom of Hell he notes with joy how he welcomed once more the lights that were set in the firmament:—

'E quindi uscimmo a riveder le *stelle*.'

The mere glimpse was joy. But they were then far off. After he has passed through the cleansing of Purgatory, they are more than a vision of beauty inaccessible. He himself is

'Puro e disposto a salire alle *stelle*.'

Lastly, when he has been led through the

* One exception may be noted in the *Convito*, iv. 28, where he maintains that 'religion' is not confined to the followers of Benedict, or Francis, or Dominic; that '*a buona e vera religione si può tornare in matrimonio stando, che Iddio non vuole religioso di noi se non il cuore.*'

* In the 'Inferno,' c. xxxiii., he had promised to open the frozen eyes of a soul in torment, if it told its story. The story is told, and then

'I oped them not,
For to cheat him was noble act and true.'

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mansions of the blessed ones, and there is given him a vision of the uncreated Glory in the Heaven of heavens, that is to him as

'L'amor che muove il sole e l' altre *stelle.*'

He has seen that and is satisfied.*

With this we may well end. Many regions of enquiry lie spread out before us and tempt us to explore them: the relation of Dante to mediæval science and to mediæval art—the varying degrees in which his poem blends in one the elements of the artist, the scholar, and the mystic. We might be led to pass in review the translations in which the last few years have been so fruitful, and to note the excellencies and defects of each—the merits or demerits of the commentaries which in our own language, or in the poet's own, or among the German critics, who here, as in other regions of literature, have distinguished themselves by the exhaustive completeness of their studies, have attempted to follow his thoughts through all their labyrinthine windings and to all their profoundest depths. But for the present, at least, we must refrain. It may be enough to record our conviction that there is yet room for another version, which shall be faithful alike to the form and spirit of the original; for another commentary, which shall neither slur over difficulties, nor overcrowd with detail, nor import the thoughts of the nineteenth century into the poem of the fourteenth; but which, being in sympathy with the man and with the period, may help English readers to understand the relation of the one to the other, and so to estimate the greatness of the man who, in his lonely wanderings through the '*avia Pieridum loca*,' was fashioned, in a far higher degree than he himself was conscious of, to be the representative poet—one might also say the prophet—of mediæval Christendom.

ART. VI.—1. *Report, Minutes of Evidence, &c., of the Schools Inquiry Commission.* 1868.

2. *The Education of the People: our weak Points and our Strength, Occasional Essays.* By J. P. Norris, M.A., Canon of Bristol. Edinburgh, 1868.

3. *Principles of Education, &c.* By the author of 'Amy Herbert,' &c. London.

4. *Memoranda of the principal Points in the Constitution and Management of Alexandra College, Dublin.* Belfast.

5. *The Coming Woman.* Boston, United States, 1868.

It ought to surprise no one that the air is thick with plans for female education. The rights and wrongs, the merits and defects, the present and the future of women, have taken possession of the field. They fill our bluebooks, our magazines, our newspapers. Scientific gatherings, Revising Barristers' Courts, the walls of Parliament, echo with the questions which they raise. One profession and trade after another is startled with the notes of intrusion. They are now invading our educational domains and laying claim to a treatment identical with that of men in schools and Universities. But though this rather sudden flutter and buzz may take us by surprise, there is nothing really strange in the phenomenon. The one sex is but following the other in the less sudden but equally pronounced development of 'progress' which has been of late taking place. The female franchise comes to the front as soon as the arguments against household suffrage for men have broken down. When the franchise is given to ignorant men, how, it is said, can it be denied to educated women? The education of boys has only just ceased to be a mystery; how can girls be any longer kept behind the lattice? The reform of the Universities has been in every one's mouth for a long time; the women begin to think they must set an example themselves. Young men of the upper class have of late been so prominently before the public in physical and mental contests, that it is natural their sisters should think their turn has come. Then we have the great overpowering fact that we have considerably more than half a million of women in excess of men within these islands, the growth of popular literature, so much assisted by women, and the notoriety of Sisterhoods and 'girls of the period' to help us to account for the phenomenon. Whether we understand it or not, here, however, it is. Perhaps the most appreciable landmark of the change of tide may appear to some in the fact that the Laureate's name figures in the list of promoters of the proposed 'College for Women,' framed after the most approved University pattern. His 'Princess,' still held by judges to be the best of his works, certainly formed for a quarter of a century the most solid barrier English wit had erected against the encroachments of the *femme savante.* It

* It is right to note, though the above paragraph was in type before the writer became acquainted with the fact, that the thought expressed in it is brought out with admirable force by the Royal commentator whose translation has been referred to at the beginning of this article.

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now only serves to measure the strength of the tide which has lifted the barrier from its moorings and left it far inland.

In point of fact the question has advanced beyond the reach of banter. It must be dealt with on its merits. There will be absurdities enough in any such movement to tempt sarcasm—absurdities which a little ridicule will be very useful in checking; but there is a sober earnestness about the movement which quietly passes over the jokes. We shall all be obliged to lend our best energies to the consideration of the problem how to place women on a level with the age in regard of education. Nor must we be deterred by the too often offensive enthusiasm of theorists or the self-interested advocacy of particular persons.

The Bluebook at the head of our list will first demand our attention. The education of girls occupied a large part of the labours of the Royal Commissioners. The novelty of this investigation, the width of its range, and its inevitable vagueness, suggest the use of it as a basis for the treatment of the whole question. The schools used by the higher classes of society are, indeed, scarcely touched in these pages; but the chief points raised affect them equally with their less pretentious sisters, and the arduous altitudes of the 'higher education for women' must be resolutely faced as much in reference to the one class of society as to the other. We may perhaps draw attention in this place to the peculiar value of the reports of the Assistant Commissioners on the subject of female education. Visiting every part of the country, they had the advantage of hearing both sides of the momentous questions involved in the inquiry, and some of the most useful remarks will be found in the answers furnished by school-mistresses and others to their papers; whereas the ladies selected for examination by the Commissioners seem to have belonged almost entirely to one school of thought, what may be called without offence 'the advanced school,' and the Commissioners themselves exhibit, if we may say so, no inconsiderable bias in that direction. The result is, that the Report itself does not leave the impression that you have fairly heard both sides of the female-education question.

On one main point the Commissioners have certainly proved their case. The Grammar schools for boys, though so seriously abused in numerous cases as to form the ground for issuing this Commission, have nevertheless kept alive a higher standard of education in our country than exists in any other. No such schools have kept the education of girls [illegible]k. A good and cheap education for the lower-middle class—we must apologise for using this painful nomenclature, but really there is no choice—is rare enough for boys; it scarcely exists at all for girls. The Universities have worked with Grammar schools in educating teachers of boys; but there has been no such aid for girls. When we add to this the consideration of the intrinsic difficulties of the case as regards home, and the future for which girls are to be educated, it will not surprise us to learn from the Report that there is almost everything to be done before we can roll away from our land a great reproach. The faults in girl training with which parents of the upper class are so painfully familiar are found in the class below, and still more, of course, in the schools where the daughters of our small tradesmen and farmers are educated, in a greatly exaggerated form. The sacrifice of everything else to 'accomplishments,' and the pitiful character of those 'accomplishments' when acquired—the poverty of the French, the worthlessness of the music, the absence of any training and strengthening of the mind, the miserably deficient school-books, the waste of time and energy in consequence of bad methods of teaching, and the inefficiency of the teachers (with some brilliant exceptions)—all this is transparent in every part of these voluminous documents, and is not denied by the persons concerned.

It is indeed touching to observe the simplicity and candour with which failure is acknowledged in many quarters; as it is equally touching, though somewhat diverting too, to read how the first advances of these 'heralds of progress' were received by the fluttered mistresses when their secure repose was first startled by the Assistant Commissioners, as by something dropped from the clouds. Was it quite wise to put this delicate task into the hands of so many young Fellows of Colleges fresh from the University, and knowing little more about girls than they could gather from novels? Possibly, however, it was a stroke of cunning. The experienced married man might have been received with still more suspicion. It was, at least, a fair challenge. Indignant at first, softening little by little, and then giving way with true feminine frankness, the ladies yielded up their secrets only to the most captivating of the knights; while in the case of other Assistant Commissioners, whether from too great abruptness, or a little extra priggishness, which we must say is rather apparent in most of them, the ladies steadfastly bit their lips and kept silence. Like the typical monkeys, who, the negroes say, will not speak for fear they should be made to work, a Spartan resolu-

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